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Resource mobilization and enabling environment for poverty eradication in the context of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010

Statement submitted by the International Tunneling Association, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraph 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 35 July 1996.

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No discussion about sustainability can be complete without addressing the construction and maintenance of shelter. Among the earliest signs of human community are sheltering underground in natural caves and later the creation of buildings, composed of walls of uncut field stones and earth, with roofs made of whatever other local materials were available.

Contemporary industrial technology brings to underground construction a changed environment, filled with daylight, air and energy for lighting and climate control. Its benefits are magnified by the intrinsic economies the earth provides.

Underground cellars and bins have been used for centuries to safely store food and other goods. This may be one of the best and least expensive ways to improve the quality of life in the least developed countries. Underground spaces, properly designed, can be built with local labour and limited outside resources to provide good and safe environment for the storage of water, food and other products and equipment.

Underground and earth-sheltered construction and storage has the following application to sustainability in shelter construction for rural communities around the world:

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- It employs the most ubiquitous building material in the world, the earth itself. The material always local and so is much of the labour. Add human ingenuity and stir.
- It combines the most ancient and modern technologies in an amalgam all its own.
- It can be competitively inexpensive and leaves behind a sustainable environment independent of support from external sources of material and energy.
- It provides safe and efficient storage of water, food, products and equipment.

We propose that development of earth-sheltered construction and underground space and storage be included as a part of the effort to create sustainable rural communities around the world, especially for the least developed countries.